

Covered With Petroglyphs

'Y' Retrieves Canyon Sandstone

By VICKI BARKER
Herald Staff Writer

A Provo man, concerned that a mystery sandstone rock inscribed with petroglyphs would be destroyed in blasting to widen the Provo Canyon Road, is relieved to find Brigham Young University rescued the rock several years ago.

Ron Elliott, who as a youngster used to hike to the secret site with friends, worried that the rare rock would be toppled in blasting that begins this afternoon. He thought he was revealing a long-preserved secret of its existence for the first time last week when he notified The Daily Herald. But Monday, UDOT's project engineer Larry Buss said the boulder had been moved to the BYU campus about two years ago.

Saturday, fearful for the rock's fate, Elliott had huffed and puffed up the hill to where the stone had been, only to find it gone, confirming his worst fears.

"I was really upset and disappointed when I went up there and saw the ledge had been cut up. The last time I saw it was 2 1/2 years ago," he told the paper Monday morning. Hearing that UDOT had moved the rock for BYU awhile back, Elliott went to see if it was the one, and called the paper Monday afternoon to confirm it was.

"That's good; anything to save petroglyphs," said Elliott, whose college education in geology led to 25 years of rockhounding and archaeology study. Elliott ran his hands over the characters on the boulder sitting on the lawn across the street from the campus botanical gardens. It



Dennis Patterson Photos

Ron Elliott examines sandstone he has visited since boyhood.

*This rock + Petroglyph
now in Bertrand
Harrison arborium
on 8th - No 5th East
Provo*

was a happy reunion for the man who's pushing 50 years.

"I felt it should be preserved because I know of nothing else around anywhere in Utah County where there's something like it," he said.

"We are required by law to relocate Indian artifacts before we begin work," said Buss. He said the rock, estimated at about 1200 pounds, was on top of a cut UDOT is working on now, about a quarter of a mile below Murdock Dam. The \$6 million project from the Murdock Diversion Canal south to the Canyon Road-800 North intersection is the first part of a plan to upgrade the stretch of U.S. 189 through the canyon.

Elliott grew up near the mouth of Provo Canyon. A friend showed him the rock about 40 years ago, reciting legends that grew to explain the rock's mysterious existence.

"Some said it was a map of some sort or an Indian message giving directions to buried treasure or a gold mine," Elliott recalled. "There were traces of gold in a tunnel nearby that is non-existent now."

Elliott has always wondered how the hunk of sandstone got to the spot in Provo Canyon, which is predominantly shale and limestone.

Dr. Don Forsyth, of BYU's anthropology and archaeology department, said Utah Valley was heavily populated by ancient Indians, so many petroglyphs are found in spots around the valley, particularly in the West Mountain area. Generally, finders keep mum about petroglyphs, Forsyth said, "because they tend to get defaced."

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Sandstone covered with Indian petroglyphs is subject of legends. The boulder formerly rested in Provo Canyon.





